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BATTLE OF GALVESTON

January 1st, 1863

by

ROBERT M. FRANKLIN

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January 1st, 1863

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ROBERT M. FRANKLIN

From -

Mrs. Carrie Franklin Kemp,  
Houston, Texas.

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Mrs. Carrie  
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Dec 10, 1935



ROBERT M. FRANKLIN

Son of Benjamin C. and Eliza Carter Brantly Franklin, of Georgia, who had prominent parts in the building of the Republic of Texas. Father and Son were jurists and soldiers of Texas.



Galveston, Texas, April 2nd, 1911.

COMMANDER AND COMRADES,

Camp Magruder, U. C. V., 105:

I shall endeavor this afternoon, to comply with your request, and give you an account, as an eye-witness, of the attack by land and water, on the Federal Squadron and troops in Galveston harbor, by the Confederates, on January 1st, 1863, generally referred to as the "Battle of Galveston."

There has been much told and written about this affair, by parties who were, for one reason or another, without accurate information on the subject, and who made no effort to sift out the facts from the mass of false rumors and yarns circulated at the time.

You will, I hope, pardon a brief reference to the subordinate part which I played as one of the Horse-marines (so called at the time) in this "Tragedy of the Seas"; since the reference is necessary to show that my account is drawn largely from my own knowledge and information on the subject.

On December 25th, 1862, when General Magruder, through Col. C. G. Forshey, of the Engineers, issued his order to Colonel DeBray, commanding the Eastern Sub-District (military) of Texas, at Houston, to have the river steamers Bayou City and Neptune fitted up, under the supervision of Major Leon Smith, for an attack on the Federal vessels, I was the Adjutant of DeBray's Regiment, and on detached service, as A.A.A.G., with Colonel DeBray. I was thus early advised of this movement, and being tired of the inactivity of life at Post Headquarters, I obtained permission from my chief, and offered my services to Major (Captain) Smith, who put me to work in the capacity of Aide, Middie, Roustabout, or whatever name is suited to his aggregation of volunteer sailors, Artillery men, Cavalry men, and Civilians, who eventually manned the boats; but whatever the rank, I was with Smith on the Bayou City, during the engagement, tried to stay close to him and see what was going on. You will have to take my word for this, however, as Smith, a bluff sailor, more gallant than courteous, not only neglected to recognize my service in his report, but left me alone in charge of a captured bark (The Elias Pike) anchored in the harbor, and apparently forgot my existence, as I remained on board for three days and was then relieved through a remarkable coincidence. In this connection I must correct a statement in General Magruder's Report, (Series 1, Vol. 15, Page 219 U. S. War Records). The General says: "On January 3rd, I being then on board the Harriet Lane, a yawl-boat, containing several men in command of a person named Thomas Smith, recently a citizen of Galveston, and who had deserted from our army, was reported along side." This statement does not conform to the facts, which were as follows: On the day of battle, Commodore Smith, on the Steamer John F. Carr had pursued the enemy's vessels to the outer bar, and on his return had towed the Bark Elias Pike from Boliver Roadstead, and anchored her in midstream off 18th Street, leaving me in charge and alone, except a sailor and cabin boy of the Bark, who had remained on the vessel, when the crew abandoned her.

Shortly after noon on January 3rd, this man Smith, a deserter commonly known as Nicaragua Smith, was sent in company with another deserter and four marines, into the harbor for a pilot, to bring the Transport Cambria over the bar. Rowing along side the Bark, and mistaking me for a "Yankee Skipper" they asked leave to come on board, which



was readily granted, as I took them for Confederates, who had supplied themselves with Federal uniforms.

As they stepped on board, the yellow stripe on my trousers caught their eyes, and noting the surprise depicted on their countenances, I took in the situation, and told them they were prisoners, giving them an account of the capture of the City three days before.

Fortunately for me, before they discovered that I was without support, Captain John Payne of the Pilots came alongside from the City looking for a United States flag, to be used in decoying the Cambria into the harbor. Climbing on deck, he at once recognized Smith, exchanged greetings with him and calling me aside warned me as to Smith's desperate character, and suggested that we had best get the men ashore at once, stating also that he had no arms. I slipped my revolver to him, retaining my cutlass, and we ordered them into their yawl, and the marines rowed us along side the Harriet Lane. I remained on deck with the prisoners, and Payne went below to report; Smith was at once taken in charge, removed to jail, Court Marshalled for desertion, and shot three days later.

In about two hours a detail came aboard the Lane, and released me from charge of the prisoners, when I returned to the Bark, and was finally relieved from this duty shortly after night-fall, I went to Headquarters to report. In this connection, I recall an incident somewhat characteristic of the times. On leaving the Bark, I had utilized two canvas ham covers, for lack of a haversack, had filled them with sugar cured ham, condensed milk, crackers and several little curios, of no especial value, and marching up to Headquarters in the Bishops residence on Cathedral square, I entered the office where General Magruder was engaged with his staff, discussing measures to prevent "The boys" from carrying off the Harriet Lane, and other captured property. There I was "flagrante delicto" as the lawyers say, but putting on a bold front, I dropped my plunder near the door, reported for duty to General DeBray, greeted General Magruder and other acquaintances and retreated in good order, carrying off my arms, ammunition and commissaries without any loss whatever, not even of time.

Meeting my Chief (Capt. Smith) pro-tem a few days later, and calling his attention to the unforeseen danger, resulting from his neglect to give me a proper detail, he informed me that he had hastened to Houston to report for duty to a young Commodore, who had assumed command in his household.

But pardon this digression, and too frequent use of the personal pronoun in these little episodes related, and possibly necessary, as above suggested, to remove any doubts as to my participation in this affair.

To give a coherent account of this engagement, I must supplement my own knowledge by data drawn from the following sources: 1st. The story of Captain Henry S. Lubbock, commanding the Bayou City, as quoted in Ex-Governor Lubbock's "Six Decades in Texas." 2nd. Series 1, Volume 15, Government Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. 3rd. Vol. 4, Congressional Executive Documents 1863-1864.

With this prelude, let us take up first—The preparation for the attack, and description of the "Cotton Clads" gun boats.

In the latter part of September, 1862, the Federals occupied Sabine Pass with two heavily armed schooners, and on October 4th, the Harriet



Lane, Owasco, Clifton and Westfield entered Galveston harbor, shelling the Fort at the end of the island, disabling the only serviceable piece of battery, a 10-inch gun, and driving the Artillerist to seek shelter in the City one and a half miles distant.

A demand was made for the surrender of the City, and Colonel Joseph J. Cook, of the 1st Regiment, Texas Heavy Artillery, declined to surrender, protesting against the further shelling, on the ground that time should be given for the removal of the women and children.

To this request the Commander of the squadron assented, allowing four days. During this period, many noncombatants fled to the interior, and the troops, guns and government property were removed to Virginia Point, and Colonel Cook, with his command occupied the earth works at either end of the railroad bridge across the arm of Galveston Bay, and about four and one half miles west of the City.

Thus, on November 29th, when General Magruder assumed command, the Texas coast from Sabine to Rio Grande, was practically in the hands of the Federals. The Texans were not resting easy under this condition of affairs. The matter of attacking the gun boats was frequently discussed. Captain Leon Smith, who had figured under Colonel VanDorn, in the capture of the *Star of the West*, off Pass Cavallo in the beginning of the war, and Captain Thomas Chubb, of the coast guard, had through Colonel DeBray suggested to General Magruder's predecessor, an attack on the vessels at Sabine Pass, and as General Magruder entered Texas at Orange, Captain A. B. Wier of Cook's Regiment 1st., Heavy Artillery, volunteered with his company to take command of a steamboat and clear Sabine Pass. Thus, in entering upon his new field of duty, General Magruder had assurance that his efforts to thwart the invasion of Texas would be ably seconded; and he found at his service also the river steamboat *Bayou City*, which had been purchased by the State of Texas, strengthened with heavy timber, and manned as a guard boat, under the command of Captain H. S. Lubbock, to protect the upper waters of Galveston Bay.

Thus matters stood on the day before Christmas, 1862, when a deserter from the Fleet, who reported himself to be the Coxswain of the *Owasco*, gave full information as to the strength and equipment of the vessels in Galveston harbor.

The next day, December 25th, General Magruder issued through Colonel C. G. Forshey, of the Engineers, the order to General DeBray commanding the Sub-district at Houston, to summon Major (Captain) Leon Smith, and directed him to take command, and prepare the *Bayou City* and *Neptune* (medium sized river steamers) for immediate service, using "cotton bales on the decks of both to give the appearance of protection and not wait to fasten it if it costs time" and "to be ready to move at 12 M. day after tomorrow, to take part in an attack upon the fleet, if things do not change."

The steamboat landing at Harrisburg at once became a busy place; and the Cotton Clads especially the *Neptune* soon resembled a Mississippi river boat of the olden time, loaded up to and on the hurricane deck with cotton bales, and her armament consisted of two 24 pound brass Howitzers, with field carriages in front of the cotton bales on lower decks. The *Bayou City* presented, however, a more formidable and rakish, or iron-clad appearance, in the dark at least. Her pilot house and upper cabin or "Texas" had been removed, leaving the broad floor of the hurricane deck unobstructed. The cabin had been condensed and part removed. The

steering wheel was centrally located in an open pen near the forward edge of the cabin deck. A row of cotton bales, flat side down and three bales high was placed on the guards, on outer edge of the cabin deck and extending aft to the wheel houses; inside of this a single row of bales, flat side down, was placed, so that the rifle men might kneel on the inner bales, while the outer row served as a breast work. The boiler deck was protected with a double tier of cotton bales, up to and flush with the cabin deck and back to the wheel houses, and in like fashion back to the stern of the boat. This arrangement left the bow of the boat clear, except a heavy rifle gun, about 6 inch caliber mounted on the lower deck and without any protection.

In order to facilitate boarding of the enemy's vessels, two large stage-planks or gangway-platforms some four feet wide and 25 feet long were poised on either side of the hurricane deck just aft of the chimneys, at an angle of about 30 degrees, and were held in place by guy ropes, which could be readily severed, so as to drop a gangway on any vessel along side. For the purpose of grappling with the foe, anchors were placed at the upper end of each stage-plank with a heavy chain running down center of each stage, and securely fastened through the hurricane deck of the steamer. The Federal boats were protected by Boarding netting, made of small rope, and about 10 feet wide, and the gangway platforms were arranged for the purpose of running along side the enemy, cutting the guy ropes, so as to drop the platforms, break through the netting, and thus afford ready means for boarding.

Two river steamboats, in the capacity of tenders, accompanied the "Cotton Clads" viz: the John F. Carr, protected by a few cotton bales around her boilers and the Lucy Gwin without any protection.

The Cotton Clad squadron, thus equipped and with the Bayou City as the Flag Ship, were officered and manned as follows: The Bayou City carrying Leon Smith in command of the "Cotton Clads" and Colonel Thomas Green in command of the troops, was under the immediate command of Capt. Henry S. Lubbock, assisted by the following subordinates: M. McCormick, Sebastian Drouet and John Payne; Pilots L. C. Hirschberger, R. C. Murray and C. M. Seymour, Engineers, and James McGarvey, mate. The bow gun was in charge of Captain A. R. Wier, and his Lieutenants, J. V. Rily, John Pentony, and some 25 men from Company "B", and a Lieutenant and four or five men from Company "C" all of Cook's Regiment heavy Artillery, Capt. James Martin's Company, and Volunteers from Green's formerly Sibley's Brigade, completed the force on the Bayou City, in all 160 or 180 men, miscellaneously armed with Minnie rifles, shot guns, pistols and cutlasses and spurs.

The Neptune was commanded by Captain W. H. Sangster with Swift and Bohn at the wheel, Dave Conner in the engine room and John McGovern as mate.

The Volunteers on this boat, some two hundred from Green's Brigade, miscellaneously armed as on the other vessel, were commanded by Colonel A. P. Baby, and the two 24 pound Howitzers on the bow were in charge of Lieutenant L. C. Harby and manned, if memory serves me, by men from Griffin's Cavalry Battalion.

The John F. Carr was commanded by Captain John Y. Lawless with William Johnson at the wheel, Richard Roll and William Witson, Engineers, and O. C. Tellefson, P. A. Speckernagle, John Schiedmantel and other volunteers.

The Lucy Gwin was in charge of Captain John H. Sterrett with Frank and Joe Boddeker at the wheel.

The Federal Squadron comprised the Flag Ship, Westfield, commander W. B. Wrenshaw, Harriet Lane steamer, side wheel carrying 6 heavy guns, Wainwright Commander, one 10 in. pivot gun on main deck, a 2.9 in. columbiads on quarter deck, 2.24 lb. Dalgrens on stern and one 32 lb. rifle on bow. The Clifton double ender, P. L. Law, Commander, carrying four guns. The Owasco propeller, Commander Henry Wilson, mounting 8 heavy guns. The Sachem, propeller with four guns. The Coryphous, schooner with three guns. The Transports, Mary A. Boardman and Saxon and coaling barks, Cavalle and Elias Pike.

These vessels were anchored on the night of the attack as follows: The Harriet Lane, in mid-channel, off 29th Street wharf; the Sachem, Coryphous and Clifton in channel in vicinity of Kuhn's wharf, or 18th Street; the Owasco in mid-channel South of Pelican Spit. The Westfield in Bolivar channel. The preparations for the attack consumed more time than was anticipated and not until the last day of the year, was everything in readiness for the combined attack by land and water, which was to be made about one o'clock A. M., but on account of getting the Artillery and troops across the bridge, and into position the signal gun, opening the engagement was not fired until after three o'clock on New Year's morning.

About noon on the day previous, the Bayou City left the landing at Houston, where her gun had been mounted, with the artillery men and a number of volunteers, and steamed down to Harrisburg to join the Neptune. From here, the Cotton Clads having made final preparations, took the volunteers on board, and steamed gaily down the bayou, the "Horse marines" so called, jesting and singing with little thought of the hazardous nature of their undertaking, if indeed they realized the dangers. Steaming down the Bayou, the Cotton Clads were joined by the tenders, John F. Carr and Lucy Gwin, and entering Galveston Bay, turned their prows toward the City, some 40 miles distant, just as the sun was dropping into the western prairie, and the bright moon was sending its slanting rays over the water from the East. Off Morgan's Point, a courier came from the shore in a row boat, bringing final orders from General Magruder, substantially as follows:

"I will attack from the City about one o'clock; take the boats as near as you can to the enemy's vessels, without risk of discovery, and attack when signal gun is fired from the City. The Rangers of the Prairie send greeting to the Rangers of the Sea."

This order brought, at least to the officers on the Bayou City who saw it, a realization of the reckless character of the adventure, and a number of them were soon gathered in a stateroom discussing "the chances." Someone asked Commodore Smith if he thought the cotton bales afforded any protection against shot and shell, and the bluff Captain replied in substance: "None whatever, not even against grape shot, our only chance is to get along side before they hit us." General Green, the gallant leader of Sibley's Brigade, which afterwards took his name, was most serious and his remarks left the impression that he had volunteered, because he did not want his men to go where he would not go himself.

The fleet steamed down the bay, slowing up about midnight near the West end of Pelican Island. At this juncture numerous rockets sent up,



and signal lights displayed on the enemy's vessels, showed that the fleet had been discovered; and Commodore Smith fearing a movement through Bolivar channel, to cut him off, withdrew his fleet some four miles to the vicinity of Half Moon Light, and waited for the signal gun.

In the meantime, General Magruder was hurrying his troop and artillery across the railroad bridge, 2 miles long, and overland  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles, to the City, where his forces were posted for the attack as follows: Captain S. J. Fontaine of Cook's regiment, supported by six companies of Pyron's regiment, was sent to Fort Point, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of the City. Wilson's battery of six field pieces was ordered to attack the vessels from Center wharf.

The platform car with 8-inch rifle gun, was on switch track about 32nd street, in the vicinity of the Harriet Lane. The remainder of the artillery, manned from Cook's regiment was posted along the shore, at the ends of the streets. A detail of about 500 men from Cook's and Pyron's regiments and Griffin's Battalion under command of Col. J. J. Cook were supplied with short ladders and ordered to attack the Federal troops barricaded on Kuhn's wharf, 18th st.

The remainder of Sibley's Brigade, Pyron's regiment and Elmore's regiment all under command of Brigadier General W. R. Scurry, were held in reserve as a support near the guns and more or less sheltered by the buildings. The hours slipped by while this disposition of the forces was being made, and it was after 3 A. M. when General Magruder pulled the lanyard of a gun, near Central wharf, and fired the signal gun opening the attack all along the shore, from Fontaine's guns at Fort Point to Whittakers at 29th and 32nd streets.

The Federal vessels promptly replied, and shot and shell from their heavier guns came crashing through the houses, and the grape shot, at short range soon showed that the artillery would not be able to hold their exposed positions after day break. Col. Cook's attempt to take the infantry barricaded on Kuhn's wharf was a failure as his ladders were too short.

Before the signal gun was fired, and about the time when the Cotton Clads were discovered, the Federal Flag-Ship, Westfield, attempted to shift her position in Bolivar Roadstead, and ran aground on the east side of Pelican Spit, and Commander Wrenshaw signalled for the Clifton to come to her assistance. This vessel leaving her position near Kuhn's wharf, ran around to the Westfield about three miles. In passing the Owasco, Capt. Law ordered her to move up to the support of the Lane and the Owasco passing the Sachem and Coryphus, took position near 21st street wharf. The attempt of the Clifton to float the Westfield failing, Commodore Wrenshaw ordered her back to the attack on the city. Day was now breaking, and the Clifton in returning, shelled Fort Point in the rear, and drove the men in confusion, across the sand flats to shelter in the city, and took her position near Kuhn's wharf. By this time the positions of the guns at the ends of the streets had become untenable, by reason of the terrific fire of grape shot and shell, and the guns had been withdrawn with considerable confusion. It was stated after the engagement that some of the troops were in full retreat toward the bridge, and that they had to be recalled when the tide of battle was turned. The official reports do not mention this fact; but at all events, it was shown that the "Rangers of the Prairie" were at great disadvantage in this unequal contest with the heavily armed "Rovers of the Seas."

At this critical moment, the "Cotton Clads" loomed up from the west in the early dawn, puffing and snorting with high pressure steam, and quivering in every timber, in the mad rush to board the Harriet Lane; the Bayou City leading, and the Neptune close behind her, when about one mile distant, a wreath of white smoke curled over the bow of the Lane and a shot from her 32-lb. Parrot Rifle howled overhead. The Bayou City promptly returned the compliment, but the shot flew wild. Again the vessels exchanged harmless shots, and at the third shot the Bayou City's gunners failed to ram the shot home, and the gun exploded, killing the gallant Captain Weir and two of his men were blown overboard and never seen. It was now evident that the "Cotton Clads" were so near the Lane that her bow gun could not be depressed enough to hit them, and lack of room to get headway prevented the Lane from getting a broadside to bear, as she was apparently trying to do. The Bayou City now steered to the right, to board the Lane on her port side and the Neptune was steered to the left.

The "Cotton Clads" were now about 200 yards from the Lane, the Neptune drawing up nearly abreast of the Bayou City and peppering away with her little 24 pounders boring small round holes in the hull of the Lane. The Bayou City, slightly in advance of the Neptune, opened a deadly fire with small arms sweeping the bridge and decks of the Lane, and driving the men from the guns. The vessels were now at close quarters, but the ebb tide was strong, and the Lane turned slightly either to ram the Bayou City, or get a broadside to bear, and at this moment the Bayou City swept swiftly under the port bow of the Lane. The guy ropes of the boarding gangway, next to the Lane were cut, but the slight movement of the Lane prevented the Bayou City from running along side. The angle was so great between vessels that the stage failed to reach the Lane and its end striking the water was swept back, tearing off part of the Bayou City's wheel house which had already been damaged in sweeping under the bow of the Lane.

The crippled "Cotton Clad" drifted down, apparently helpless toward 27th street wharf and the men on the Lane got back to the guns on the quarter deck of the vessel two 9 inch Columbiads and double shotted them with grape but the Neptune at this moment running head on into the Lane on the opposite side, and sweeping her decks with bullet and buck-shot drove the men from their guns. The frail riverboat shaken from stem to stern by the concussion, began to sink, and her Captain ran her ashore about opposite 32nd street. In the meantime, the wheel of the Bayou City was cleared of the wreckage. The vessel was quickly turned and headed for the Lane striking under her port wheel guard, before her men could get back to her gun and just as she was backing to join her consorts down the bay. The arms and braces of the Lane's iron paddle wheel were driven through the bow and deck of the "Cotton Clad" in a gnarled and tangled mass.

The angle at which the vessels were locked, was again too great to use the remaining boarding plank. Few men were visible on the Lane's quarter-deck and the main deck was cut off from view by the wheel house and engine room, and after a very short interval of random firing of small arms, Commodore Smith appeared, cutlass in hand, climbing over the boarding netting, where it was attached to the Lane's wheel house. Half way over, he stopped and called on the men to follow, and was quickly

joined by 15 or 20 men principally from Company "B" Cook's' regiment. Smith jumped down on the deck, followed by these men and as he reached the deck a seaman stepped out from the wheel house gangway, threw up his hands and surrendered, stating that he was a master's mate, and that Commander Wainwright was dead, and Lieutenant Lee was mortally wounded. This surrender was so sudden that it excited suspicion in the mind of Lieutenant John Pentony of Company "B" Cook's regiment, who suggested the propriety of looking after the Magazine and Pentony and the writer went below, found the door of the Captain's saloon, over the Magazine locked, looked in through opening in the door used for passing ammunition, but saw no signs of a fuse or fire and returned to the deck, finding the decks occupied everywhere by the Bayou City's men, and the Lane's crew below decks.

During the attack on the Lane, there was little firing from the shore; at this juncture, a gun from the shore began firing, probably one of Whittaker's guns sending shells shrieking overhead, and at the same time the Owasco, less than a half mile distant, began to throw 10-inch shells at the "Cotton Clads" and the Lane, one shot striking the stern of the Lane 2½ feet above the Magazine. There was considerable excitement and confusion. We had no Confederate Flag to hoist and Smith suggested a rebel yell to stop the fire of our own men; others suggested bringing the prisoners on deck to stop the Owasco's firing. Both suggestions were carried out with a vim, and our men on shore took in the situation and ceased firing.

At the suggestion of Captain Lubbock, a white flag was hoisted on the Lane and he was sent by Commodore Smith in one of the Lane's boats, manned by a crew from the Bayou City, to demand the surrender of the fleet. White flags were hoisted at the same time on the Owasco and Clifton. Boarding the Owasco, the Captain (Wilson) stated that he was not in command. Next boarding the Clifton, Commander Law asked for three hours truce, so that he could consult with Commander Wrenshaw, Captain Law taking with him acting Master Hannum of the Lane, who was with Lubbock under parole, proceeded to the Westfield and Captain Lubbock was rowed by his crew to Kuhn's wharf, where he met Colonel I. S. Burrell commanding the detachment of the 422 Mass. Infantry barricaded on this wharf, who accompanied Lubbock until they met General Scurry, who demanded immediate surrender, to which Col. Burrell acceded and Captain Lubbock proceeded to report to General Magruder who accompanied him back to Kuhn's wharf whence they were rowed to the Harriet Lane, which vessel, locked hard and fast to the Bayou City, had been during Captain Lubbock's absence, docked at 27th street wharf.

Desperate efforts were made to disentangle the Lane. Two hundred or more men on the bow of the Bayou City attempted by their weight and prying to get them apart.

While these events were transpiring Captain Law had reported to Commodore Wrenshaw who at once determined to blow his vessel up, and evacuate the harbor, ordered the Saxon and Boardman (transports) to come near and take the Westfield's crew aboard. The crew was all removed with the exception of Commander Wrenshaw, Lieutenant Zimmerman, two other officers and crew of the Captain's gig, 13 in all, who remained to fire the vessel. The fire was applied by Captain Wrenshaw, he was descending the ladder and all the rest were in the boat when about 9 o'clock the magazine prematurely exploded. This occurred shortly before the Lane was docked at 27th street wharf.



The effort to disentangle the Lane in order to use her in case the enemy renewed the attack, failed. The two 24 pound Dalgrens on the stern of the Lane were the only guns bearing on the Owasco. These were too small and they were drawn aside and the 9-inch Columbiads on either side of the quarter deck of Lane were drawn from their port holes and trained aft, so that the first fire would cut away the bulwarks of the Lane, after which they could be trained on the Owasco. These guns had been loaded, and the Lane's gunners had been driven away before they could be trained and fired.

The period of truce was now drawing to a close, Captain Law had returned to his vessel with instructions to leave the harbor.

Unaware of the death of Commander Wrenshaw, General Magruder sent Captain Lubbock and Colonel Green under a flag of truce claiming the vessels immediately under his guns and giving time to consider demand for surrender of entire fleet. These messengers had passed the Owasco and boarded the Clifton, when some fifteen minutes before the expiration of the truce, the screw of the Owasco began to churn the water, and it became evident that the Federal vessels were quietly slipping out of the harbor with truce flags still flying. Commodore Smith turned the Columbiads loose at the Owasco, tearing away bulwarks of the Lane, and strewing the surface of the bay as far as the Owasco with grape shot. The Clifton hurried out, dropping the truce party farther down the channel and the whole fleet excepting the two barks crowded steam and sail for the outer bar. Commodore Smith signaled for the John F. Carr, the only available craft left him, and calling for volunteers about 150 men jumped aboard and started in pursuit but considerable time was lost in getting the Carr from her position west of the wharves and the fleet had over a mile start.

The Owasco and Clifton quickly increased the distance, the men on the transports appeared to be busy throwing deck load overboard and the Sachem which seemed to be slow or crippled began firing at the Carr but her shots went wild and the Carr pushed on toward the outer bar, but gave up the chase and returned to the city when the swells threatened to rock the smoke stacks out of her.

Thus ended this little battle scantily noted in the histories of that period. It was daring in conception, dashing to the verge of recklessness in execution and far reaching in its results. For it drove the enemy from the harbor of Galveston and inspired a series of victories that saved the state from the horrors of invasion by a hostile army.

Texas owes much to the memory of the gallant Magruder. Proud by nature, haughty of mein, "Prince John" as his old West Point comrades dubbed him. He was far from perfection. Neither was he endowed with those traits of character that command the love of men, as well as their respect, yet he was a gallant soldier, honest and true to his country. Of a generous and unsuspecting nature he was imposed on and unfortunate in the selection of some of his subordinates whose acts aroused prejudices against him, which still linger in the hearts of some old Texans. But, his defense of the Peninsula in Virginia and his brilliant achievements in Texas attest his military genius and prove him a soldier and a captain and our camp has honored itself in honoring the name of Magruder.

There was much criticism by the Federals at the action of the surviving officers of their fleet, in leaving the harbor. Admiral Farragut was particularly severe and a Court of Inquiry was held in New Orleans which

it seems returned a Scotch verdict merely reciting the facts. It is easy to criticize, especially at a safe distance and when not burdened with responsibility for the lives and property at stake. The Federals did not have sea-room to manoeuver their vessels, their men were being picked off by the riflemen on shore. Their flagship hopelessly grounded, the favorite of the fleet, the trim little Harriet Lane in the hands of the enemy and so far as the Federals knew, ready to join the supposed formidable ram, the Bayou City; inevitable defeat seemed the only alternative. Doubtless Commander Wrenshaw learned of the carnage on the Lane, from Acting Master Hannum who accompanied Commander Law to the flagship.

The surgeons report of the casualties on the Lane, shows what the attack of the "Cotton Clads" signified at close quarters: Killed—Commander Wainwright, musket ball in brain, 3 wounds in breast and 3 in thigh.

Lieutenant Commander Edward Lee, wounded in abdomen and sides, 5 wounds in all.

James Pollock, landsman, shot in head, musket ball.

Henry Newton, contraband musket shot in breast.

John Hart, landsman, 8 wounds in abdomen, buckshot.

W. F. Monroe, acting master, buckshot in head.

Wounded, 15.

On the other vessels which were exposed only to the fire from the city, the casualties were:

Owasco—1 killed, 15 wounded.

Clifton—1 wounded.

Sachem—1 mortally wounded.

Westfield—13 killed by explosion.

The loss of the Confederates was 26 killed and 117 wounded, among them the gallant Captain Wier, first to offer his company to Magruder for service in attacking the Federal vessels. The lamented young Lieutenant Sidney Sherman, whose father led the Texan Cavalry to victory at San Jacinto fell, mortally wounded at his guns at the foot of 20th street.

The story of this battle can never be complete without mention of the noble nuns of the Ursuline Convent, who refused the opportunity given them to leave the city, threw open their peaceful retreat to serve as a hospital and themselves ministered to the dying and wounded soldiers tenderly and with equal care to friend and foe.

ROBERT M. FRANKLIN.

















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